

# Pumpkin

## History

Pumpkins are native to Central and North America, originally growing on river banks alongside sunflowers and beans. American Indians would grow “Three Sisters” gardens, which contained beans, corn, and squash- or pumpkins. Tribes used every portion of the pumpkin. They would cook and eat the flesh, roast and eat the seeds, add the flowers to stews, and used the hollowed-out shells as a bowl. American Indians introduced pumpkins to settlers and the pilgrims as they arrived in the United States. Pumpkins helped the newcomers survive the winters because of their hardy shell that preserves the vegetable through winter.

Pumpkins are a part of the squash family. We are most familiar with round, orange, carved pumpkins being present at Halloween time. Historically, the Irish and Scots carved turnips or potatoes as part of a Celtic celebration. Once they saw the American version of pumpkins, they realized that pumpkins have the perfect size, shape, and texture for carving. With time, the Celtic celebration turned into a community holiday we know as Halloween, and the tradition of pumpkin carving stuck.

As suggested by their orange color, pumpkins contain beta-carotenes, an antioxidant that may reduce a person’s chances of cancer, heart disease, and degenerative aging. Varying your veggies and eating all the colors of the rainbow ensures that you are getting all of the vitamins and minerals a growing body needs!



## Varieties

**Autumn Gold** weighs between 8-15 pounds.

**Connecticut Field** is the classic pumpkin weighing in at 15-25 pounds.

**Jack be Little** is a miniature, orange version of the classic pumpkin.

**Baby Bear** is small and has a flattened shape.

**Buckskin** has a tan skin and is usually used for canned pumpkin.

## Fun Facts

- Even though they are part of the squash family, pumpkins are considered a fruit because they grow on a vine and contain seeds
- Do not grab a pumpkin by the stem- stemless pumpkins do not keep well
- Many pumpkins have prickly stems, so use caution when handling them
- A Jack-O-Lantern pumpkin can be used for Halloween carving- and eating!



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